N° 100. SATURDAY, *December* 30, 1786.

AMONG the cautions which prudence and worldly wiſdom inculcate on the young, or at leaſt among thoſe ſober truths which experience often pretends to have acquired, is that danger which is ſaid to reſult from the purſuit of letters and of ſcience, in men deſtined for the labours of buſineſs, for the active exertions of profeſſional life. The abſtraction of learning, the ſpeculations of ſcience, and the viſionary excurſions of fancy, are fatal, it is ſaid, to the ſteady purſuit of common objects, to the habits of plodding induſtry which ordinary buſineſs demands. The fineneſs of mind, which is created or increaſed by the ſtudy of letters, or the admiration of the arts, is ſuppoſed to incapacitate a man for the drudgery by which profeſſional eminence is gained; as a nicely-tempered edge applied to a coarſe and rugged material, is unable to perform what a more common inſtrument would have ſucceſſfully atchieved. A young man deſtined for law or commerce is adviſed to look only into his folio of precedents, or his method of book-keeping; and Dulneſs is pointed to his homage, as

that benevolent goddess, under whose protection the honours of station, and the blessings of opulence, are to be attained; while Learning and Genius are proscribed, as leading their votaries to barren indigence and merited neglect. In doubting the truth of these assertions, I think I shall not entertain any hurtful degree of scepticism, because the general current of opinion seems of late years to have set too strongly in the contrary direction; and one may endeavour to prop the failing cause of literature, without being accused of blameable or dangerous partiality.

In the examples which memory and experience produce, of idleness, of dissipation, and of poverty, brought on by an indulgence of literary or poetical enthusiasm, the evidence must necessarily be on one side of the question only. Of the few whom learning or genius have led astray, the ill-success or the ruin is marked by the celebrity of the sufferer. Of the many who have been as dull as they were profligate, and as ignorant as they were poor, the fate is unknown from the insignificance of those by whom it was endured. If we may reason *a priori* on the matter, the chances, I think, should be on the side of literature.

In young minds of any vivacity, there is a natural aversion to the drudgery of business,

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which is seldom overcome, till the effervescence of youth is allayed by the progress of time and habit, or till that very warmth is enlisted on the side of their profession, by the opening prospects of ambition or emolument. From this tyranny, as youth conceives it, of attention and of labour, relief is commonly sought from some favourite avocation or amusement, for which a young man either finds or steals a portion of his time, either patiently plods through his task, in expectation of its approach, or anticipates its arrival, by deserting his work before the legal period for amusement is arrived. It may fairly be questioned, whether the most innocent of those amusements is either so honourable or so safe, as the avocations of learning or of science. Of minds uninformed and gross, whom youthful spirits agitate, but fancy and feeling have no power to impel, the amusements will generally be either boisterous or effeminate, will either dissipate their attention, or weaken their force. The employment of a young man's vacant hours is often too little attended to by those rigid masters who exact the most scrupulous observance of the periods destined for business. The waste of time is undoubtedly a very calculable loss; but the waste or the depravation of mind is a loss of a much higher denomination. The votary of study, or the enthusiast of

fancy, may incur the firſt; but the latter will be ſuffered chiefly by him whom ignorance, or want of imagination, has left to the groſsneſs of mere ſenſual enjoyments.

In this, as in other reſpects, the love of letters is friendly to ſober manners and virtuous conduct, which in every profeſſion is the road to ſucceſs and to reſpect. Without adopting the common-place reflections againſt ſome particular departments, it muſt be allowed, that in mere men of buſineſs, there is a certain profeſſional rule of right, which is not always honourable, and though meant to be ſelfiſh, very ſeldom profits. A ſuperior education generally corrects this, by opening the mind to different motives of action, to the feelings of delicacy, the ſenſe of honour, and a contempt of wealth, when earned by a deſertion of thoſe principles.

The moral beauty of thoſe diſpoſitions may perhaps rather provoke the ſmile, than excite the imitation, of mere men of buſineſs and the world. But I will venture to tell them, that, even on their own principles, they are miſtaken. The qualities which they ſometimes prefer as more calculated for puſhing a young man's way in life, ſeldom attain the end, in contemplation of which they are not ſo nice about the means. This is ſtrongly exemplified by the ill ſucceſs of many,

many, who, from their earlieſt youth, had acquired the higheſt reputation for ſharpneſs and cunning. Thoſe trickiſh qualities look to ſmall advantages unfairly won, rather than to great ones honourably attained. The direct, the open, and the candid, are the ſureſt road to ſucceſs in every department of life. It needs a certain ſuperior degree of ability to perceive and to adopt this; mean and uninformed minds ſeize on corners, which they cultivate with narrow views to very little advantage: enlarged and well-informed minds embrace great and honourable objects; and if they fail of obtaining them, are liable to none of thoſe pangs which rankle in the boſom of artifice defeated, or of cunning over-matched.

To the improvement of our faculties, as well as of our principles, the love of letters appears to be favourable. Letters require a certain ſort of application, though of a kind perhaps very different from that which buſineſs would recommend. Granting that they are unprofitable in themſelves, as that word is uſed in the language of the world; yet, as developing the powers of thought and reflection, they may be an amuſement of ſome uſe, as thoſe ſports of children in which Numbers are uſed, familiariſe them to the elements of arithmetic. They give room for the exerciſe of that diſcernment, that

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comparifon of objects, that diftinction of caufes, which is to increafe the fkill of the phyfician, to guide the fpeculations of the merchant, and to prompt the arguments of the lawyer; and tho' fome profeffions employ but very few faculties of the mind, yet there is fcarce any branch of bufinefs in which a man who can think will not excel him who can only labour. We fhall accordingly find, in many departments where learned information feemed of all qualities the leaft neceffary, that thofe who poffeffed it in a degree above their fellows, have found, from that very circumftance, the road to eminence and to wealth.

But I muft often repeat, that wealth does not neceffarily create happinefs, nor confer dignity: a truth which it may be thought declamation to infift on, but which the prefent time feems particularly to require being told. The influx of foreign riches, and of foreign luxury, which this country has of late experienced, has almoft levelled every diftinction but that of money among us. The creft of noble or illuftrious anceftry has funk before the fudden accumulation of wealth in vulgar hands: but that were little, had not the elegance of manners, had not the dignity of deportment, had not the pride of virtue, which ufed to characterife fome of our high-born names, given way to that tide of

of fortune which has lifted the low, the illiterate, and the unfeeling into ſtations of which they were unworthy. Learning and genius have not always reſiſted the torrent; but I know no bulwarks better calculated to reſiſt it. The love of letters is connected with an independence and delicacy of mind, which is a great preſervative againſt that ſervile homage which abject men pay to fortune; and there is a certain claſſical pride, which, from the ſociety of Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Atticus, looks down with an honeſt diſdain on the wealth-blown inſects of modern times, neither enlightened by knowledge nor ennobled by virtue. The "non "omnis moriar" of the Poet draws on futurity for the deficiencies of the preſent; and even in the preſent, thoſe avenues of more refined pleaſure, which the cultivation of knowledge, of fancy, and of feeling, opens to the mind, give to the votary of Science a real ſuperiority of enjoyment in what he poſſeſſes, and free him from much of that envy and regret which leſs cultivated ſpirits feel from their wants.

In the poſſeſſion, indeed, of what he has attained, in that reſt and retirement from his labours, with the hopes of which his fatigues were lightened, and his cares were ſoothed, the mere man of buſineſs frequently undergoes ſuffering, inſtead of finding enjoyment. To be buſy, as

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one ought, is an eaſy art; but to know how to be idle, is a very ſuperior accompliſhment. This difficulty is much increaſed with perſons, to whom the habit of employment has made ſome active exertion neceſſary; who cannot ſleep contented in the torpor of indolence, or amuſe themſelves with thoſe lighter trifles in which he, who inherited idleneſs as he did fortune from his anceſtors, has been accuſtomed to find amuſement. The miſeries and mortifications of the "retired pleaſures" of men of buſineſs have been frequently matter of ſpeculation to the moraliſt, and of ridicule to the wit. But he who has mixed general knowledge with profeſſional ſkill, and literary amuſement with profeſſional labour, will have ſome ſtock wherewith to ſupport him in idleneſs, ſome ſpring for his mind when unbent from buſineſs, ſome employment for thoſe hours which retirement or ſolitude has left vacant and unoccupied. Independence in the uſe of one's time is not the leaſt valuable ſpecies of freedom. This liberty the Man of Letters enjoys; while the ignorant and the illiterate often retire from the thraldom of buſineſs, only to become the ſlaves of languor, intemperance, or vice.

But the ſituation in which the advantages of that endowment of mind which letters beſtow are chiefly conſpicuous, is old age, when a

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man's ſociety is neceſſarily circumſcribed, and his powers of active enjoyment are unavoidably diminiſhed. Unfit for the buſtle of affairs and the amuſements of his youth, an old man, if he has no ſource of mental exertion or employment, often ſettles into the gloom of melancholy and peeviſhneſs, or petrifies his feelings by habitual intoxication. From an old man whoſe gratifications were ſolely derived from thoſe ſenſual appetites which time has blunted, or from thoſe trivial amuſements of which youth only can ſhare, age has cut off almoſt every ſource of enjoyment. But to him who has ſtored his mind with the information, and can ſtill employ it in the amuſement of letters, this blank of life is admirably filled up. He acts, he thinks, and he feels with that literary world whoſe ſociety he can at all times enjoy. There is perhaps no ſtate more capable of comfort to ourſelves, or more attractive of veneration from others, than that which ſuch an old age affords; it is then the twilight of the paſſions, when they are mitigated but not extinguiſhed, and ſpread their gentle influence over the evening of our days, in alliance with reaſon, and in amity with virtue.

Nor perhaps, if fairly eſtimated, are the little poliſh and complacencies of ſocial life leſs increaſed by the cultivation of letters, than the

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enjoyment of ſolitary or retired leiſure. To the politeneſs of form and the eaſe of manner, buſineſs is naturally unfavourable, becauſe buſineſs looks to the uſe, not the decoration of things. But the man of buſineſs who has cultivated letters, will commonly have ſoftened his feelings, if he has not ſmoothed his manner or poliſhed his addreſs. He may be awkward, but will ſeldom be rude; may treſpaſs in the ignorance of ceremonial, but will not offend againſt the ſubſtantial rules of civility. In converſation, the pedantry of profeſſion unavoidably inſinuates itſelf among men of every calling. The lawyer, the merchant, and the ſoldier (this laſt perhaps, from obvious enough cauſes, the moſt of the three), naturally ſlide into the accuſtomed train of thinking, and the accuſtomed ſtyle of converſation. The pedantry of the man of learning is generally the moſt tolerable and the leaſt tireſome of any; and he who has mixed a certain portion of learning with his ordinary profeſſion, has generally corrected, in a conſiderable degree, the abſtraction of the one and the coarſeneſs of the other.

In the more important relations of ſociety, in the cloſer intercourſe of friend, of huſband, and of father, that ſuperior delicacy and refinement of feeling which the cultivation of the mind beſtows, heighten affection into ſentiment, and

and mingle with ſuch connections a dignity and tenderneſs which give its deareſt value to our exiſtence. In fortunate circumſtances thoſe feelings enhance proſperity; but in the decline of fortune, as in the decline of life, their influence and importance are chiefly felt. They ſmooth the harſhneſs of adverſity, and on the brow of misfortune print that languid ſmile, which their votaries would often not exchange for the broadeſt mirth of thoſe unfeelingly proſperous men, who poſſeſs good fortune, but have not a heart for happineſs.

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